

when I came across the dead moth. Perhaps an occasional diligent search of trunks for adults in August, or moss for larvae in May/June might reveal the presence of this insect elsewhere. However, the most promising sites to seek this moss-feeding moth might be in those which have had a long continuity of forest cover, creating the right habitat for a variety of mosses to flourish. Royal Forests are probably a better bet than, say, formerly coppiced woodlands: bryophytes seem to require long periods without disturbance to grow best (Rose, 1976), and the regular coppicing of many woods last century may have exterminated their foodplant and habitat requirements.

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References

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NOTES ON HYPENA ROSTRALIS L. (LEP.: NOCTUIDAE) —

It would seem worthy of placing on record the capture of a single male *Hypena rostralis* (L.), in worn condition, at m.v. light in my garden in Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire on the night of 25 May 1987, (ten Km grid square TL 42). The national distribution shown in *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* **10**, page 389, shows a cluster of dots in the Surrey-Middlesex area, with only a scattered distribution elsewhere. Only eight post-1960 dots appear to be further north than the current record, all widely scattered and the most northerly for Britain being only 40 kilometres north of Bishops Stortford. Foster's 1937 'A List of the Lepidoptera of Hertfordshire' in the *Trans. Herts. nat. Hist. Soc. Fld. Club.* **20**: 157-279, gives Bricket Wood, St. Albans, Hitchin, Cheshunt, East Barnet, Watford, Bushey Heath, Tring, Berkhamsted and New Barnet, all without further comment. It is interesting that most of these localities border the north London area, in the south of the county, and that there are no records from the north-east near Stortford. The 1985 *List of the Macrolepidoptera of the*

Bishops Stortford area, published by the Bishops Stortford Natural History Society has no mention of the species, though there is a post 1960 record in *MBGBI* for TL 41, just beyond their recording area. The earlier (1950) list for the same area by P. B. M. Allan, (*Trans. Bishops Stortford nat. Hist. Soc.* volume 1, part 1), has three entries under *H. rostralis*: "Fairly common (Coleman); Several at sugar in the town in 1936 (Allan); Common at Little Hadham (Perkins)". No other Hertfordshire records have as yet come to my notice, and there are none at the Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre at Baldock Museum. In the neighbouring county of Essex the moth appears still to be genuinely rare outside the metropolitan zone of east London, with only five post-1970 ten-kilometre dots listed in *The larger butterflies and moths of Essex* by Emmet and Pyman, (1985), and none of these being near Bishops Stortford. In the metropolitan area, however, the situation appears different, as the moth has become increasingly regular at a number of light traps across the Capital over the last four or five years: records here seem to indicate that the moth may be spreading northwards and eastwards, at present fairly slowly. In any event it will be interesting to keep an eye open for this moth wherever hops are growing in a 'wild' situation.

The adult moth is a very easy insect to record: the secret is to look for it in the middle of winter! The adults hibernate in places which are usually cool and dark, but always dry. In London, I have found it in garden sheds, garages, outside toilet buildings in gardens, "Anderson" air-raid shelters, coal-bunkers and in the spiral staircase of a church tower. The common factor between all the sites is the presence of hops, (*Humulus lupulus*) in the immediate vicinity of the hibernation site. It can be spotted in such sites with the aid of a torch, since it seems to prefer to sit fully exposed, (in the middle of a wall for example), particularly if the site is permanently dark, (as in, for example, the church tower). In sites which may be lit on occasion, such as garden sheds, it secretes itself away and is more difficult to locate. I have not yet found it in hollow trees but have no reason to suppose this may not also prove a suitable place to search. Finding the larvae is equally easy. Select an area where hops grow in a mat across the ground and look for leaves riddled with holes. This feeding pattern is more or less identical to that of the currant pug *Eupithecia assimilata* Doubleday, so records of that species made solely on the feeding pattern on hop leaves are unreliable. The snout larvae can be easily obtained by use of a standard sweep net on hops where the leaves are holed. They feed nocturnally, but can be collected by day as they rest on the undersides of the leaves. In spite of what the books say the males at least do come to light, albeit sparingly. COLIN W. PLANT, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, London E15. 4LZ.

LARVAL CASES OF *INCURVARIA PECTINEA* HAWORTH (LEP.: INCURVARIIDAE) ON WOOD ANTS' NESTS — The following observations were made while on a walk round the Nature trail in the Glen Nant Forest Nature Reserve on 24th July 1987. It was a fine sunny day, ideal for the Open day that was in progress at the reserve in aid of the European Year of the Environment, and as a result the Wood Ants' nests were a hive of activity. While watching the comings and goings at one nest I became aware that some of the particles of debris forming the surface of the nest were in fact the bivalved larval cases of *Incurvaria pectinea* Haw. Closer inspection showed that there were no fewer than 14 cases of this species on the nest and all were being trampled over by the many voracious worker ants. In idle curiosity I picked up one of the cases and was surprised to find that it still contained a living larva. The nearest birch tree was some 15 feet from the nest and on inspection was found to have some of its lower leaves perforated by the characteristic oval holes left by the larvae of *I. pectinea* cutting out their first case after their initial period as leaf-miners. Furthermore directly beneath these leaves one of the dead Birch leaves on the ground contained a clean oval hole where a larva had subsequently cut out an oval of dead leaf to form one side of its bivalved case — the source of the cases was thus obvious.

Careful inspection of some 6 other wood ants' nests in close proximity to birch trees revealed that on 4 no larval cases of *pectinea* were to be seen but on the other two there was one and 10 cases respectively. Just over half of the cases examined still contained living larvae. The nature of the debris used by the different ant colonies in the construction of their nests was very variable and not simply dependent on what material was at hand — thus on one nest dead oak buds predominated while on another dead birch catkins were a major component. Thus selectivity of nest material by the ants may account for the presence of *pectinea* cases on only a few nests while *pectinea* larvae probably occurred close to all the nests judging by the abundance of characteristically perforated leaves.

I would be interested to know how widespread this hazard for *I. pectinea* larvae is. Or is it a hazard? It would appear that their bivalved cases are adequate protection against the ants and at night the larvae could safely emerge and feed on the leaf debris brought to the nest by the ants. Which parasitic hymenopteran is going to search for and attack a larva in the midst of a crowd of Wood Ants? Most parasitica appear to be primarily active during the daylight hours. All speculation of course but this could be an example of commensalism in the making. — K. P. BLAND, 35 Charterhall Road, Edinburgh EH9 3HS.